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Ishtar, Inanna, & Ancient Astrology

Valkyrie

Many might be interested in some information that I came across awhile back that might shed some light on this for you. Some may have seen part of this already. Someone in a shamanic echo was asking about how scorpions and spiders were related to each other in dreams, and what meaning the scorpion had, especially in regards to an earth goddess. I ran across a reference in one of those 'feminist revisionists'" books <G> and the statement was made that the Scorpion was found nearly world wide associated with an old Mother Goddess and the constellation Scorpio. I think it might provide some of the connections you are looking for.

So I found a book that wasn't cross-referenced by that author, which is recognized in its field (astronomical history) and was surprised to find that it wasn't an exaggeration.

Richard Hinckley Allen, *Star Names: Their Lore and Meaning* , Dover Publications, Inc., New York:1963. The book was originally published by G. E. Stechert in 1899, under the former title: *Star-Names and Their Meanings* . I consider this a reliable source to balance a perhaps more "revisionist" view since it was written during a period by an expert who probably never questioned it theologically and reported facts as facts. Bear with me, the first part becomes significant as you go along.

pg. 360-365.

SCORPIO, or SCORPIUS, the SCORPION, was the reputed slayer of the Giant, exalted to the skies and now rising from the horizon as Orion, still in fear of the Scorpion, sinks below it; although the latter itself was in danger, -Sackville writing in his Induction to the *Mirror of Magistrates* , in 1565.

> Whiles Scorpio, dreading Sagittarius' dart
> Whose bow prest bent in flight the string had slipped
> Down slid into the ocean flood apart.

Classical authors saw in it the monster that caused the disastrous runaway of the steeds of Phoebus Apollow when in the inexperienced hands of Phaethon.

For some centuries before the Christian era it was the largest of the zodiac figures, forming with the [Greek name] it's Claws, -the *prosectae chelae* of Cicero, now our Libra,-a double constellation, as Ovid wrote:

> Porrigit in spatium signorum membra duorum;

and this figuring has been adduced as the strongest proof of Scorpio's great antiquity, from the belief that only six constellations made up on the earliest zodiac, of which this extended sign was one.

With the Greeks it universally was [Greek]; Aratos, singularly making but slight allusion to it, added [Greek]; while another very appropriate term with Aratos was [Greek], the Great Sign. This reported magnitude perhaps was due to the mythological necessity of greater size for the slayer of great Orion, in reference to which that author characterized it as [Greek] 'appearing huger still.'

The Latins occasionally wrote the word *Scorpios* , but usually *Scorpius* , or Scorpio; while Cicero, Ennius, Manilius, and perhaps Columella gave the kindred African title Nepa, or Nepas, the first of which the Alfonsine Tables copy, as did Manilus the Greek adjective, [G], Walking Backward. Astronomical writers and commentators, down to comparatively modern times, occasionally mentioned its two division under the combined title Sorpius cum Chelis; while some representations even showed the Scales in the creature's Claws.

Grotius said that the Barbarians called the Claws Graffias, and the Latins, according to Pliny, Forficulae.

In early China it was an important part of the figure of the mighty but genial Azure Dragon of the East and of spring, in later days the residence of the heavenly Blue Emperor; but in the time of Confucius it was Ta Who, the Great Fire, a primeval name for its star Antares; and Shing Kung, a Divine Temple, was applied to the stars of the tail. As a member of the early zodiac it was the *Hare* , for which, in the 16th century, was substituted, from Jesuit teaching, *Tien He* , the Celestial Scorpion.

Sir William Drummond asserted that in the zodiac which the patriarch Abraham knew it was an Eagle; and some commentators have located here the biblical Chambers of the South, Scorpio being directly opposite the Pleiades on the sphere, both thought to be mentioned in the same passage of the *Book of Job* with two other opposed constellations, the Bear and Orion; but the original usually is considered a reference to the southern heavens in general. Aben Ezra identified Scorpio, or Antares, with the K'sil of the Hebrews; although that people generally considered those stars as a Scorpion, their Akrabh, and, it is claimed, inscribed it on the banners of Dan as the emblem of the tribe whose founder was 'a serpent by the way." When thus shown it was as a *crowned Snake* or *Basilisk* . A similar figure appeared for it at one period of Egyptian astronomy; indeed it is thus met with in modern times, for Chatterton, that precocious poet of the last century, plainly wrote of the Scorpion in his line, " The slimy serpent swelters in his course;" and long before him Spenser had, in the *Faeirie Queen* , " and now in Ocean deepe Orion flying fast from hissing snake, His flaming head did hasten for to steepe.

But the Denderah zodiac shows the typical form.

Kircher called the whole constellation [Gk] *Statio Isidis* , the bright Antares having been at one time a symbol of Isis.

The Arabians knew it as Al Akrab, the Scorpion, from which have degenerated Alacrab, Alatrab, Alatrap, Hacrab, -Riccioli's Askrab and Hacerab; and similarly it was the Syrians' Akreva. Riccioli gave us Acrobo *Chaldaeis* , which may be true, but in this Latin word he probably had reference to the astrologers.

The Persians had a Scorpion in their Gherzdum or Kdum, and the Turks, in their Koirughi, Tailed, and Uzun Koirughi, Long tailed.

The Akkadians called it Girtab, the Seizer, or Stinger, and the Place where One Bows Down, titles indicative of the creature's dangerous character, although some early translators of the cuneiform text rendered it the *Double Sword* . With later dwellers on the Euphrates it was the symbol of darkness, showing the decline of the sun's power after the

autumnal equinox, then located in it. Always prominent in that astronomy. Jensen thinks that it was formed there 5000 BC, and pictured much as it now is; perhaps also in the semi-human form of two Scorpion-men, the early circular Altar or Lamp being shown grasped in the Claws, as the Scales were in illustrations of the 15th century. In Babylonia this calendar sign was identified with the eighth month, Arakh Savna, our October-November.

Early India knew it as Ali, Vicrika, or Vrouchicam, -in Tamil, Vrishman; but later on Varah Mihira said Kaurpya, and Al Biruni, Kaurba, both from the Greek Scorpios. On the Cingalese zodiac it was Ussika. Dante designated it as Un Secchione, "Formed like a bucket that is all ablaze; and in the *Purgatorio* as Il Friddo Animal of our motto, not a mistaken reference to the creature's nature, but to its rising in the cold hours of the dawn when he was gazing upon it. Dante's translator Longfellow has something similar in his own *Poet's Calendar* for October: On the frigid Scorpion I ride.

Chaucer wrote of it, in the *Hous of Fame* as the Scorpioun; his Anglo-Norman predecessors, Escopiun; and the Anglo-Saxons, Throwend.

Caesisu mistakenly considered it one of the Scorpions of Rehobam; but Novidius said that it was "the scorpion or serpent whereby Pharaoh, King of Egypt, was enforced to let the children of Israel depart out of his country;" of which Hood said "there is no such thing in history." Other Christians of their day changed its figure to that of the Apostle Bartholmew; and Weigel, to a Cardinal's Hat.

In some popular books of the present day it is the Kite, which it resembles as much as a Scorpion.

Its symbol is now given as [Astrological symbol], but in earlier times the sting of the creature was added, perhaps so showing the feet, tail and dart; but the similarity in their symbols may indicate that there has been some intimate connection, now forgotten, between Scorpio and the formerly adjacent Virgo.

Ampelius assigned to it the care of Africus, the Southwest Wind, a duty which, he said, Aries and Sagittarius shared; and the weather-wise of antiquity thought that its setting exerted a malignant influence, and was accompanied by storms; but the alchemists held it in high regard, for only when the sun was in this sign could the transmutation of iron into gold be performed. Astrologers, on the other hand, although they considered it a fruitful sign, "active and eminent," knew it as the accursed constellation, the baleful source of war and discord, the birthplace of the planet mars, and so the House of Mars, the Martis Sidus of Manilus. But this was located in the sting and tail; the claws, as [Gk] Jugum, or the Yoke of the Balance, being devoted to Venus, because this goddess united persons under the yoke of matrimony. It was supposed to govern the region of the groin in the human body and to reign over Judaea, Mauritania, Catalonia, Norway, West Silesia, Upper Batavia, Barbary, Morocco, Valencia, and Messina; the early Manilius claiming it as the tutelary sign of Carthage, Libya, Egypt, Sardinia, and other island of the Italian coast. Brown was its assigned color, and Pliny asserted that the appearance of a comet here portended a plague of reptiles and insects, especially of locusts.

Although nominally in the zodiac, the sun actually occupies but nine days in passing through the two portions that project upwards into Orhiuchus, so far south of the ecliptic is it; indeed, except for these projections, it could not be claimed as a member of the zodiac.

Scorpion is famous as the region of the sky where have appeared many of the brilliant temporary stars, chief among them, perhaps, that of 134 BC., the first in astronomical annals, and the occasion, Pliny said of the catalogue of Hipparchos, about 125 BC. The Chinese She Ke confirmed this appearance by its record of the "strange star" in June of that year, in the sieu Fang, marked by [...] and others in Scorpio. Serviss thinks it conceivable that the strange outburst of these novae in and near Scorpio may have had some effect in causing this constellation to be regarded by the ancients as malign in its influence. But this character may, with at least equal probability, have come from the fiery color of its *lucida* , as well as from the history of the constellation in connection with Orion, and the poisonous attributes of its earthly namesake.

In southern latitudes Scorpio is magnificently seen in its entirety, nearly 45 degrees,-Gould cataloguing in it 184 naked-eye stars.

Along its northern border, perhaps in Orphiuchus, there was, in very early days, a constellation, the Fox, taken from the Egyptian sphere of Petosiris, but we know nothing as to its details.

"Antares" The Ariabians Kalb al Akrab, the Scorpion's Heart, which probably preceded the [Gk] and Cor Scorpii of Greece and Rome respectively.

In Buffie Johnson's *Lady of the Beasts* (Harper, San Francisco, 1981) pgs 332-335, there are illustrations and photos of statuary and pottery which show the representation of the Scorpion Goddess, as Selket, a woman with the lower torso taking the shape of a scorpion with a raised tail. On her head is the "horned" headdress with the disk between the horns, the horns and sun disk of Isis. (New Kingdom 1570-332 BCE). A Stamp seal showing two scorpions protecting the rosette of the goddess Inanna, from Sumer, ca 3300 BCE, and a statue of Selket wearing a scorpion on her head, as well as a drawing from Ur, ca 2400 BCE showing the goddess giving birth guarded by scorpions.

In the *Book of the Dead* seven scorpions accompany Isis, when her son Horus was bitten by one scorpion of the most deadly species, her scorpion friends saved her son out of love for her...and bit the son of a woman who had refused to help, then with her magic, Isis then saved the bitten boy. (A classic shamanism motif(. Selket is shown as beneficial when associated with Isis, and it is possible that the "other" woman is Isis's dark aspect.

Selket symbolizes resurrection into a new life beyond earthly existence. "Gathering the setting sun into her outstretched arms she becomes the link between the living and the dead and helps the dead accommodate themselves to their new land. In another aspect, Selket is united with Sirius, as a consequence the star if placed in her crown." (ibid. p. 334) Johnson also compares Chamunda, the scorpion deity of the central Indian tradition with the other scorpion goddess with the endowment of poison which indicates her connection with death and rebirth.

"The Scorpion expresses the vital spirit in humans which, transformed, becomes the divine pneuma. One of its symbols is the scorpion which stings itself to death (E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians* vol. 2 (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969), 377-78.

> "The association between serpent and scorpion, both sudden and dangerous stingers, appears in the Babylonian and Greek astrological sign of Scorpio, which corresponds to the Ctyptian sign of the autumn equinox, the serpent. In esoteric traditions, the scorpion is recognized as a spiritual insect through its gift of self-immolation and rebirth. The venom of the scorpion is said to contain its own antidote."

The Scorpion as the dual Mother, the one who gave birth to and then "swallowed" the divine son (sun) is found in Egyptian myth as the Scorpion which killed Horus, sending him to his midwinter death and resurrection as his Mother Isis gave him rebirth. Spirits of the four points of the year were called Sons of Horus and placed as small images on the pharaoh's tombs...a man, bull, lion and scorpion or serpent...which seem to have become the four angels of the Apocalypse.

Istar, Babylonian, "Star" was the Great Goddess who appears as Ashtoreth, Anath, Asherah. She was referred to as the Great Whore, and described in Revelation 17:5 as Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots. Another of her titles was the Goddess Har, who called herself the compassionate prostitute.

Interestingly enough, in the Voluspa there is mention of the Hall of Har, where Gullveig was mentioned as being, who was "held up by spears" and who supposedly started the war between the Vanir and the Aesir by being attacked in the hall of Har...which is usually translated as Odin. <G> There might be a better explanation, now that I think of it...I wonder how I missed that before.

Anyway, Ishtar was also called in Babylonian prayers: The Light of the World, Leader of Hosts, Opener of the Womb, Righteous Judge, Lawgiver, Goddess of Goddesses (Vanadis?), Bestower of Strength, Framer of all Decrees, Lady of Victory, Forgiver of Sins, among many other 'kennings'. Other sources suggest Ishtar was the same Great Goddess as Dea Syria, Astarte, Cybelle, Aphrodite, Kore, Mari, Mari-Ana and others. Preceding her though were supposedly the Sumerian Goddess Inanna, who rescued and/or gave birth to Dumuzi her sacred son/lover just as Ishtar did with Tammuz. Correlating to both was the Egyptian goddess Isis, who was the "Oldest of the Old," and the "Goddess from whom all becoming Arose," and her title was the same as the Queen Mother of Egypt's.

Apuleius, a Roman philosopher, poet and Isis-worshipper, addressed her under several goddess names: For the Phrygians that are the first of all men call me the Mother of the gods of Pessinus; the Athenians, which are sprung from their own soil, Cecropian Minerva; the Cyprians, which are girt about by the sea, Pahphian Venus; the Cretans, which bear arrows, Dictynian Diana; the Sicilians, which speak three tongues, infernal Proserpine; the Eleusinians, their ancient goddess Ceres; some Juno, others Bellona, others Hecate, others Ramnusie...the Egyptians, skilled in ancient lore, worship me with proper ceremonies and call me by my true name, Queen Isis. (Richard Knight, *the Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology* . New York: J.W. Bouton, 1892.)

Isis/Nephthys was, or were, the Egyptian version of the creating-and-destroying Goddess, who were also typified as "weeping goddesses." And with other goddesses of this type were known as Guardians and Keepers of the Dead, and with the power over life and death, and healing. They can be found in shamanic traditions the world over as the Underworld deity and as the Lady of the Beasts.

[Gk] *Statio Isidis* , the bright Antares having been at one time a symbol of Isis.

This part becomes particularly interesting to me, since the Isidis is very similar to a term used for a particular group of ladies, comparable to the Disir of the Norse tradition, the OHG 'itis' or OE "ides" meaning applied to earthly women, but also used in kennings as 'goddess.' As a term for 'woman' it also has the meaning of 'virgin'.

The worship of the Disir occurred during the winter nights. And interesting correlation that could be made is that the Celtic and the Norse "winter" rites both involve some of the same archetypes and ceremonies, especially the duality of life and death and the door being open and "unguarded" at that time. The Wild Hunt Motif would be a defining factor here, including both the Dark Mother and the Lord of Death. The disir had two appearances, bright (swans

feathers) and black (raven or crow feathers)...they were psychopomps, and hardly distinguishable from valkyrie at times. In the Wild Hunt they were accompanied by various Gods, Herne, Woden and others in various traditions and countries.

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